

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 are pending in the application, and all the claims are rejected.

Response to Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

A. Claims 1-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dittmer, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,241,826), optionally in view of Schneider, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,232,254).

B. Claims 12-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dittmer and optionally Schneider as applied to claims 1-11, and further in view of Sueyoshi, et al. (JP 53-125964).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 1-15, at least for the following reasons.

Claim 1 is drawn to a method for regenerating an NO_x removal catalyst employed in a flue gas NO_x removal apparatus. The method of claim 1 *consists of* (i) a regeneration step of immersing the NO_x removal catalyst in the form of a columnar honeycomb structure, with bubbling from the NO_x removal catalyst, for 1-30 minutes at ambient temperature in regeneration water containing substantially no chlorine and no cleaning component, (ii) removing the catalyst from the regeneration water, (iii) removing water from the catalyst, and (iv) a treatment step including treating the regeneration water which has been employed in the regeneration step in an ordinary wastewater treatment facility without performing a heavy metal treatment step on regenerating water.

The use of “consisting of” transitional language in claim 1 excludes additional steps, such as the ultrasonic treatment taught as an essential step by Dittmer. The presently claimed method for regenerating an NO_x removal catalyst is based on a “bubble break-up” action rather than the

ultrasonic treatment step, that is required by the NO_x removal catalyst regeneration method disclosed in Dittmer.

Moreover, present claim 1 recites that “a regeneration step including immersing the NO_x removal catalyst in the form of a columnar honeycomb structure, with bubbling from the NO_x removal catalyst, for 1 to 30 minutes (without ultrasonic treatment) at ambient temperature in regeneration water containing substantially no chlorine and no cleaning component; removing the catalyst from the regeneration water” is not taught or suggested by Dittmer.

Schneider does not cure the above discussed deficiency in Dittmer.

Accordingly, claim 1 is patentable over the combination of Dittmer and Schneider. Claims 2-11 are also patentable, at least by virtue of their dependence from claim 1. Claims 12-15 are patentable, at least by virtue of their dependence from claim 1, and because Sueyoshi does not cure the above discussed deficiency in the combination of Dittmer and Schneider.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 103(a) rejections of claims 1-15.

Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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